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ENGRAVED ARMOR AND A VENETIAN SHORT SWORD

FOR the Department of Arms and Armor three lots were purchased at the Volpi sale, i. e., two half-suits of armor and a short Venetian sword, or *cinquedeia*. The two harnesses, earlier from the collection



FIG. 1. HALF-SUIT, ITALIAN, 1590-1600
SHIELD (RIGGS COLLECTION)

of Count Bernandini of Lucca, are excellent examples of a type well known in northern Italy during the last decades of the sixteenth century. One of them is engraved in the fashion often called "Pisan"—ornamented in bands of etching in which each band includes lateral lines, often in rope-pattern, and a wide central area in which dismembered panoplies are depicted. In this area helmets, gauntlets, shields,

greaves, swords, darts, even harps and crowns follow one another in bewildering profusion¹ on a background of dots. The dots, we may note, were produced by a succession of loops, scratched through the etching varnish by the point of the artist's needle, instead of being painted in by separate dabs of a varnish-filled brush-point, as in the German style. In their "make" and decoration, these "Pisan" harnesses show the work of armorers of many grades of skill, and they are now known to have been produced in the ateliers of northern Italy and, with slight changes, in France and Spain, between the years 1550 and 1610. The present example is the only one which the writer recalls as bearing a date, for on the breast-plate is etched the year 1571. We have reason to believe that some if not much of this armor was produced in Venice; for it occurs not uncommonly in Venetian portraits, as in the full-length painting of the admiral Giovanni Battista Rota (1525-1578) which we exhibit in Gallery H 7, in which the burgonet bears engraved bands radiating from the ear region toward the crest of the helmet—precisely the fashion of ornament in the burgonet of the present armor. Similar radiating bands in the headpiece occur, furthermore, in Venetian specimens in the Museo Correr and in a half-suit of armor somewhat like the present one (now exhibited in Gallery H 8), which appears to have been primitively on the wall of a Venetian palace. The last specimen bears the poinçon of a bull, marking the work, we believe, of an unidentified Venetian armorer.

The second half-suit from the Volpi sale is of later date, 1590-1600 (fig. 1); it is closely etched with a design of tree-and-crescent, which appears in so formal and compact an arrangement as to suggest the pattern of damask; for the artist who decorated armor sometimes copied or adapted the design of a tissue. It is possible, however, that the ornament here represents the repeated badge of the Strozzi, although, as the writer's colleague, R. T.

¹Hence this type of armor is disrespectfully called "suits of pots and mops" by English experts.

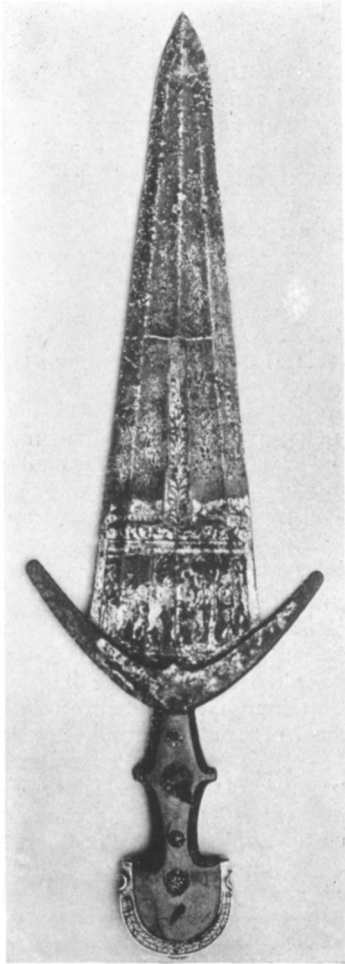
Nichol, points out, the tree is not quite of the form which figures in one of the blazons of this great house. The workmanship of the present suit is Italian, but whether from Milan, Brescia, or Venice we cannot decide. That it represents a specific style is evident, for we know of several harnesses, complete or fragmentary, in which the pattern is nearly the same. A shield in the Riggs Collection (shown in fig. 1) bears closely apposed crescents, but with palm-leaf and fleur-de-lis; a gauntlet of similar pattern, showing, however, mullets, is in the writer's collection, and a headpiece of this suit belongs to a London amateur. In the Royal Museum in Turin there is a similar breastplate (C 35), a shoulder guard, and a complete suit (B 35). In our specimen the hip guards are formed each of a single piece, a symptom of the late date of the armor.

We may note that the workmanship in our newly acquired armor is painstaking, but monotonous, suggesting the decadence of the armorer's art, and recalling the tradition that some of the great captains of the late sixteenth century, e. g., Parma and Alva, had several thousand engraved suits worn by their officers and men. At the present time, however, armor of this kind is uncommon, and when in good condition exceedingly rare. It is not known how long the present specimens were in the gallery of Count Bernandini in Lucca, but it is evident that they were long preserved under favorable conditions, since the steel has kept in large degree its

original surface. Both of our half-suits, moreover, are reasonably complete. The "Pisan" specimen lacks only its chin-piece, and its two narrow waist-plates. In its gauntlets, even the fingers are authentic and show a curious etched pattern at their

tips, suggesting very small scales. In the second suit the ear-flaps alone were lacking, and it now adds greatly to the appearance of this harness that the missing elements have been restored by the Museum armorer, M. Tachaux. These parts, as usual in our Museum restorations, have been signed and dated so that they may not be confused with the neighboring authentic pieces.

The ox-tongue dagger, or cinquedeia, is a welcome accession to our series, as one of the rarest and most highly prized of early arms, and a richly decorated one at that. The present specimen was recovered several years ago from the mud of a Venetian canal. It was brought by the man who dredged it to a Venetian antiquary, Sr. Enrico Grego, from whom it passed into the hands of Professor Volpi. The writer chanced when in Venice to hear of its discovery and was disappointed to find that the object had already been sold; he would have been considerably less distressed had he foreseen that this rare object would



CINQUEDEIA, VENETIAN
ABOUT 1500

in a few years find its way into the Metropolitan Museum—and at a small fraction of the sum which it brought in Venice! In spite of its long sojourn in the mud of the canal, the present cinquedeia is fairly well preserved. In fact, it often

happens that objects which become buried deep in clayey or peaty mud, suffer little from rusting. A dense crust comes to form about the metal, cemented together by a small amount of iron oxide, and thereafter serves to protect the surface. I recall, in this connection, a sword of the thirteenth century in the collection of M. Charles Buttin in Paris, which under similar circumstances has retained to an extraordinary degree its primitive surface, even to its original burnish. In the case of the cinquedea the horn plates of the handle have become discolored and are partly fossilized; the brass mountings, including the perforated rosettes have

undergone mineralogical changes, developing pyrites at certain points; the blade, well preserved in general, is here and there deeply invaded by lines of rust which follow the curious "damascus" layering of the steel. Happily, however, the process of rusting has not gone to the point of effacing either on blade or hilt the rich gilding and etching. On the section of the blade nearest the hilt a composition appears, with a series of nude figures, approximating very closely the work of Hercule di Fideli.¹ This leads us to conclude that our cinquedea dates from about the year 1500.

B. D.

ACCESSIONS AND NOTES

DEPARTMENT OF PRINTS: GIFTS. In the month of December the Museum received the following prints as gifts:

From Paul J. Sachs, Assistant Director of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, a set of ten colored etchings by Mary Cassatt. These are among the most successful colored etchings made in the nineteenth century and constitute from a technical point of view perhaps the most important experiment made in the graphic arts by the impressionist school of painting.

From Arthur Sachs, trial proofs in black of the three plates of the set of ten above mentioned, known respectively as *The Bath*, *The Letter*, and *The Dress*; also two successive proofs of Miss Cassatt's dry point known as *La Bonne et l'Enfant*, and single impressions of the finished states of *Bibi Joue* and *La Femme au Perroquet*. The seven prints given by Arthur Sachs all come from the Roger Marx Collection and are quite remarkable in quality.

Walter E. Sachs presented impressions of five plates from the first edition of Goya's *Tauromaquia* and six prints from the *Caprices* of the same artist, among them the very well-known *A caza de dientes* and *Mala noche*.
W. M. I., Jr.

BONNETS AND LACE. The Museum is again indebted to Mrs. R. T. Auchmuty in the gift of four old-time bonnets, an interesting addition to its collection of American costumes, the nucleus of which originated in the bequest of Mrs. Maria P. James of South Norwalk, Connecticut, in 1911. One of these, of dark blue velvet trimmed with black ostrich feathers, is a variant of the large poke-bonnet type, which, to be correct in style, should be worn so as entirely to conceal the profile of the wearer.

Perhaps the daintiest of the group, however, is one of fine leghorn straw purchased in Italy and made up in Paris. It is of the smaller "poke" type with a small cape at the back, trimmed with lace and white lilacs. When hats of this style were the vogue, Dame Fashion was a much more staid person than at present when every few weeks witness a radical change in some feature of prevailing style. Another, similar in shape, marks the gradual shrinkage in the size of the head covering; this is a gay little straw bonnet fitting close to the head and trimmed with cherry-colored ribbon. This bonnet, Mrs. Auchmuty states, was made upon the receipt of

¹Cf. Ch. Yriarte, *Gazette Archéologique*, 1888, pp. 65-78 and 131-142.